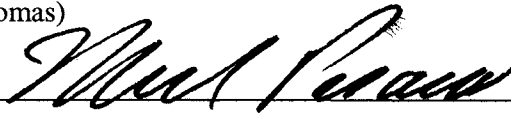


REPORT

DATE: June 3, 2004
TO: The Regional Council
FROM: Charlotte Eckelbecker, Government Affairs Analyst
Phone: (213) 236-1811 E-Mail: eckelbec@scag.ca.gov
SUBJECT: Letter in Support of S. 1107 (Thomas)

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S APPROVAL



RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorize submittal of letter

SUMMARY:

S. 1107, introduced by Senator Craig Thomas (R-WY), makes permanent a user fee presently collected as a demonstration project by the National Park Service. The fees are used for visitor services, maintenance and repair of facilities, and cultural and natural resource management. The EEC heard S. 1107 as an information item last month at the request of a committee member. The EEC was supportive of the bill and asked that a letter be sent to the author addressing Congress' ongoing need to commit funds to parks and extending the bill to the National Forest Service. The letter is attached for the Regional Council's approval.

BACKGROUND:

Senator Craig Thomas (R-WY) introduced S. 1107, the Recreational Fee Authority Act of 2004, on May 20, 2003 to make permanent a user fee currently collected by the National Park Service as part of a demonstration project slated to sunset in 2005. S. 1107 has been heard by the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources Subcommittee on National Parks and has been reported from the Committee with a favorable amendment. S. 1107 remains on the Senate Legislative Calendar under General Orders, No. 443.

Since its inception in 1997, the fee demonstration project that would be made permanent in S. 1107 has collected over \$708 million for visitor services, maintenance and repair of facilities, and cultural and natural resource management. Parks participating in the demonstration project may keep up to 80 percent of fees they collect; the remaining 20 percent are shared on a service-wide basis among non-participating parks. The Secretary of the Interior determines which parks may collect fees and sets the fee rate. S. 1107 extends the demonstration project indefinitely.

The EEC was supportive of S. 1107 and asked that a letter be sent to the author stressing that the fee should not replace ongoing and adequate congressional funding. Furthermore, the fee should be extended to the National Forest Service. The letter is attached for the Regional Council's approval.

FISCAL IMPACT:

All work related to adopting the recommended staff action is contained within the adopted FY 03/04 budget and adopted 2004 SCAG Legislative Program and does not require the allocation of any additional financial resources.

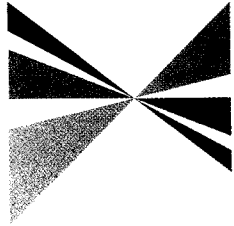
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Orange County Transportation Authority: Charles Smith, Orange County

Riverside County Transportation Commission: Robin Lowe, Hemet

Ventura County Transportation Commission: Bill Davis, Simi Valley

June 3, 2004

The Honorable Craig Thomas
United States Senate
307 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Regarding: S. 1107 Recreational Fee Authority Act of 2004

Dear Senator Thomas:

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization for the six-county Southern California region. On behalf of the Regional Council, SCAG's governing body, I write to share with you our thoughts on S. 1107, the Recreational Fee Authority Act of 2004.

SCAG's Energy and Environment Committee recently considered S. 1107, which would permanently authorize the Adventure Pass, the fee that is collected in several national parks. The Committee was supportive of S. 1107 and believed the fee should supplement, but not replace, ongoing and adequate congressional funding. Furthermore, the Adventure Pass program should be extended to the National Forest Service so it, too, can address its backlog of deferred maintenance with Adventure Pass revenues.

During the discussion of the Adventure Pass program, it was noted that some Southern Californian parks had occasionally run out of passes, at which point the fee could not be collected. We hope that if the program is permanently continued, problems in supply will be remedied to fully maximize the program's benefits.

Thank you for your efforts on S. 1107 and the Adventure Pass. If you have any questions, please contact Charlotte Eckelbecker, SCAG Government Affairs Analyst, at (213) 236-1811 or eckelbec@scag.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

RON ROBERTS
President, SCAG
Councilmember, City of Temecula

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